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ABSTRACT

Conquest is a laboratory project for first-grade repeaters and for students in second grade through sixth grade who have difficulty in reading. It features an individualized, eclectic approach made possible by low student/teacher ratios and by a wide variety of materials and equipment. Instructional and diagnostic procedures are highly structured, facilitating the task of individualizing instruction for a large number of students. Children nominated by their classroom teachers are thoroughly screened for reading deficiencies and contributing health conditions prior to admission to the project. A nurse and a counselor work with problems outside the scope of the reading clinicians. This brochure describes the program's approach and requirements in terms of instruction, management/communication, personnel, materials/equipment, facilities, and costs. Criteria to consider in adopting the program and a timetable for getting started are also outlined. (AA)

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Project Conquest

Analysis and Selection Kit

CS 002 892

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Project Conquest

Project Conquest is a program designed to help children in grades one through six become better readers. Students leave their regular classrooms to participate.

Students	Students are nominated by their regular classroom teachers. Final selection is made by the project staff and teachers and is based on results of the Conquest diagnostic procedure.
Staff	Conquest staff consists of a project director and secretary, reading coordinators, clinicians, aides, and clerks. The services of a counselor and nurse are also used in the project.
Student/Staff Ratio	A reading coordinator typically teaches four students per period, while a clinician works with six students per period. A reading coordinator and two clinicians can serve 80 students per year.
Facilities	Each Conquest lab requires one classroom, which is typically located in the school it serves. Labs in which first-grade repeaters, second, and third graders are served are called "reading rooms." The labs for fourth, fifth, and sixth graders are called "clinics." Students work in individual study carrels. Office space is required in the district office building for the project director and secretary.
Instruction	Conquest features an eclectic approach emphasizing personal attention, careful diagnosis, and a wide variety of learning methods and materials. Teachers follow a tightly sequenced pattern of diagnostic and prescriptive procedures.
Training	Instructional staff receives two weeks' training prior to the start of the project, and in-service training one-half day each week.
Scheduling	Each group of students spends one 50-minute period a day in Conquest. In general, students stay in Conquest for the entire year.

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Conquest

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Conquest is one of six projects selected as unusually successful for teaching reading and/or mathematics to underachieving students in low-income areas. Project Information Packages including detailed guidelines for installing and operating these projects are available from the U.S. Office of Education to qualifying school districts.

Granville, a second-grader, is a little late to his Conquest session. The five other students are already in their carrels woking quietly on their programed readers.

Mrs. McLean promised Granville he would get to work on the controlled reader today, and he hopes he isn't too late. Right now, she is helping one of the students with vowel sounds. Granville goes to his carrel and begins work, anxiously awaiting his turn.

Conquest is a laboratory project for first-grade repeaters and second through sixth graders who have difficulty in reading. It features a carefully individualized, eclectic approach made possible by low student-teacher ratios and a wide variety of materials and equipment. Instructional and diagnostic procedures are highly structured, facilitating the task of individualizing instruction for a large number of students.

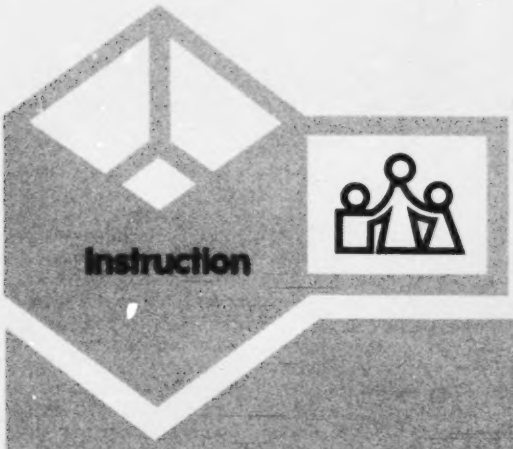
Conquest calls its reading laboratories "clinics" and "reading rooms." The difference in names depends on the grade levels served. First-grade repeaters, second, and third graders go to reading rooms, while fourth, fifth, and sixth graders go to clinics. Members of the teaching staff are called "clinicians." The clinical orientation sets the tone for the careful diagnosis of student problems. Children nominated by their classroom teachers are thoroughly screened for reading deficiencies and contributing health conditions prior to admission to the project. A nurse and a counselor work with problems outside the scope of the reading clinicians.

A student reporting to a Conquest room goes directly to his or her assigned carrel. The teacher usually lays out the required materials before the students arrive, and the students get right to work following their individualized lesson plans. The students are animated and attentive, but the atmosphere is orderly and quiet.

Students spend one period a day at Conquest. Part of the time is spent working in a programmed reading series, which helps provide structure to the instructional approach, although it is only one of many activities. Teachers choose from a wide variety of books, games, learning machines, and other materials to provide variety and to suit the learning needs of the students. Daily lesson plans usually include three or four different activities for each student.

Project Origin

Project Conquest was developed as an ESEA Title I project by school personnel in East St. Louis, Illinois, a large city where the majority of the population is black and poor. It has been in operation there since 1965 and has recently been tried out in selected school districts across the country.



Instruction

- Project determines sequence of activities and schedules.
- Students work mainly in carrels, guided by an activity folder.
- Individualized, eclectic instruction.
- Second- through sixth-grade students and first-grade repeaters.
- Daily 50-minute periods.
- Student-teacher ratio during a period six to one (clinicians) and four to one (reading coordinators).

Conquest provides supplementary instruction for second- through sixth-grade students who have problems in reading. First-grade repeaters also are served.

Conquest uses an eclectic, individualized approach emphasizing personal attention, careful diagnosis, and a wide variety of learning methods and materials. But while instruction is individualized for each student, teachers are carefully trained to follow essentially the same diagnostic and prescriptive procedures through the project. Although the project director makes every effort to get the best available teachers, Conquest procedures and continuing in-service training for teaching staff lead to the high quality of Conquest instruction.

Instruction takes place in labs designated reading rooms and clinics. The difference between these two is in grade level. Reading rooms serve first-grade repeaters, second, and third graders, while clinics serve students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

Conquest clinicians and aides work in reading rooms and/or clinics with groups of six students. Each group spends one 50-minute period a day at Conquest. The project operates five periods a day, so each clinician serves 30 students. In general students stay in Conquest for the entire year.

One or more clinicians are designated reading coordinator. Coordinators work in reading rooms and/or clinics with groups of four students.

Their lighter student load gives them time to act as consultants to the other clinicians. In addition, reading coordinators may teach fewer than five periods per day so that they can assist clinicians in separate labs and help the project director with training and administrative duties.

Two features make Conquest instruction different from that of other reading projects. The first is the use of study carrels. Each student's name is fixed on a carrel, which becomes his or her personal work space. Students like carrels and work more independently in them, but the biggest effect of the carrels is that they eliminate the sense of commotion and make the Conquest rooms very orderly.

A second major instructional feature of Conquest is the use of a programmed reading series as an important part of the project. Many clinicians have their students start with programmed reading each day. This gives continuity to the sessions, and it means that each student can sit down and get to work without help from the teacher.

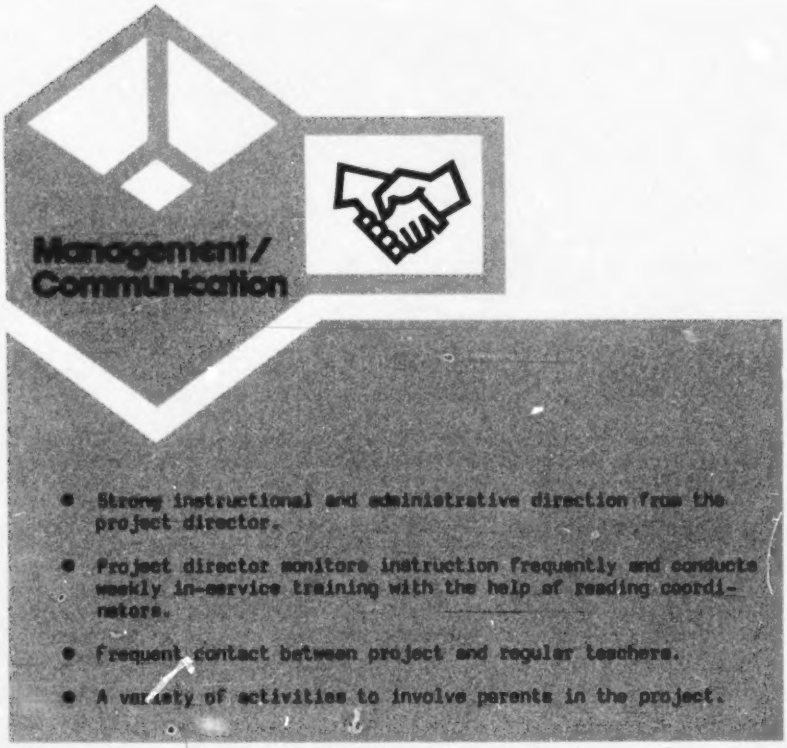
Once the students are settled and working quietly, the teacher can move from one to the next checking their progress and selecting new activities for the next day's lesson plans. Teachers keep individual charts in each student's folder, and the students follow them with very little help. The rule of thumb is 10 to 15 minutes on any one activity, but each student works at his or her own pace on different activities, so the changes are spread throughout the class period. The teacher has time to help where necessary and to work with individuals or small groups. Most Conquest students have a history of classroom failure, but they respond well to the combination of responsibility and success they experience in Conquest.

A key to the success that Conquest students experience is the careful diagnosis of their reading and personal problems. Conquest puts every nominated student through a carefully sequenced diagnostic process at the start of the year. The steps include a variety of reading tests and health checks to determine whether each student has the potential to benefit from Conquest and to provide clinicians with a clear picture of the problems of each child selected for the project. Careful monitoring of progress lets teachers make assignments that are challenging without being frustrating. The teachers learn the advantages of all the different Conquest materials and equipment during weekly in-service training. If they need help with any student, the project director and reading coordinators are always available.

Friday afternoons are reserved for in-service training, so afternoon students come to Conquest only four days a week. Thursday afternoon and Friday morning are reserved for instructional games. These provide variety and reward Conquest students for hard work during the week.

Students are nominated for Conquest by the regular classroom teachers. The Conquest teachers and project director make the final decisions on the basis of the diagnostic procedure.

CAUTION: Eliminating either the carrels, the programmed reading series, or the diagnostic procedure completely changes the nature of the project.


Management/
Communication
• Strong instructional and administrative direction from the project director.
• Project director monitors instruction frequently and conducts weekly in-service training with the help of reading coordinators.
• Frequent contact between project and regular teachers.
• A variety of activities to involve parents in the project.

The key to Conquest management is close supervision. The project director is both instructional and administrative supervisor. He or she determines the instructional approaches to be used, trains the teachers in these approaches, and monitors their performance in the project.

As instructional supervisor, the project director visits all Conquest labs frequently, observing instruction, checking student folders, and offering suggestions and advice. He or she also serves as a resource person, keeping abreast of the latest techniques and materials and, with the help of the reading coordinator, conducts the weekly in-service training sessions. To a large extent, these inputs from the project director determine the nature of Conquest instruction and are critical to project success.

As administrator, the Conquest project director is responsible for the usual planning, budgeting, troubleshooting, and personnel functions. The important considerations are that the project has adequate personnel and material resources.

Personnel include both teaching and auxiliary staff. The project director hires and fires staff, ensuring that only highly effective teachers stay in the project. He or she must also negotiate with the district for the part-time services of a nurse and a counselor. Without health and counseling help, many Conquest students are blocked from progress in reading.

Material resources include learning materials, equipment, and adequate classroom space. The project director must secure the funds for materials and equipment, and also plays the major role in their selection. Classroom space may be in short supply in Conquest schools, and it may be necessary to negotiate for extra, portable classroom space.

Conquest must operate as a cohesive project. Conquest teachers are housed in the schools they serve, but they are responsible to the Conquest project director in the district office rather than to the building principal. This special status is required to ensure the quality of the teaching staff and to maintain close communication within the project.

Reading coordinators assist the project director in advising and training less experienced clinicians, although technically all clinicians are responsible directly to the project director. As the size of the project increases, the task of managing Conquest becomes too much for a project director alone. Consequently, the management role of the reading coordinators becomes increasingly important.

The approval and cooperation of participating schools and parents are important to project success. Conquest teachers make a continuing effort to involve the regular classroom teachers by meeting with them during free periods and lunch and by encouraging them to visit the Conquest reading rooms and clinics. The project staff uses a variety of techniques to involve parents, from open houses to potluck suppers.

CAUTION: Without a strong administrator to direct the project, Conquest is ineffective.

CONQUEST: ESTIMATING COSTS [1]
(One Combined Reading Room/Clinic, 80 students)

	Number	Estimated Total Cost to Project
ANNUAL COSTS		
Personnel		
Project Director [2]	1.0	_____
Secretary to Project Director [2]	1.0	_____
Reading Coordinator	1.0	_____
Clinicians	2.0	_____
Aide	1.0	_____
Clerk	.5	_____
Counselor	.25	_____
Facilities [3]		
Project Director's Office	1	_____
Classroom	1	_____
Materials/Equipment		2,000.00
Total Estimated Annual Cost		_____
ADDITIONAL START-UP COSTS		
Personnel		
Project Director (March-August, 50% time)		_____
Reading Coordinator (August, full time)		_____
Training Stipends for staff (two weeks)		_____
Facilities		
Student Carrels (16)		1,600.00
Materials/Equipment		6,000.00
Total Estimated Additional Start-up Cost		_____

[1] See page 9 of the Project Selection Guide.

[2] If this salary would not be charged to project funds, enter zero.

[3] Space may be available within the district at no cost to project.

CONQUEST ORGANIZATION

- Administrative personnel
  Project director and secretary

- Instructional staff (one combined reading room/clinic)
  Reading coordinator
  Two clinicians
  One aide
  One clerk (half-time)

- Auxiliary staff
  Counselor (quarter-time for two combined reading room/ clinics)
  Nurse (initial screening, consulting)

- 80 students each year per combined reading room/clinic

Conquest operates with a full-time project director and secretary and a staff of reading coordinators, clinicians, aides, and clerks. The part-time services of a counselor and nurse are also used.

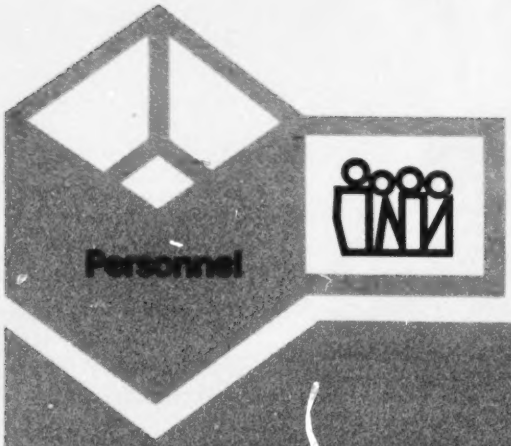
Reading coordinators and clinicians serve students in fourth through sixth grades in both reading rooms and clinics. A combined reading room/clinic is shared by one reading coordinator and two clinicians. Each combined classroom has an aide who provides instructional assistance and a half-time clerk for clerical tasks. A counselor within the district works closely with project teachers in providing services to students. Approximately a quarter-time commitment from a counselor is needed to serve every two combined reading room/ clinics. Nursing services are used primarily for medical screening of project-eligible students. Nurses are generally not paid with project funds.

It is advisable to begin the project with no more than two or three combined reading room/clinics. Conquest depends on the careful training and close supervision provided by the project director. These tasks become too demanding with a large, inexperienced staff.

Each reading coordinator instructs four children in each of five 50-minute sessions per day; each clinician teaches six children per session. This means that 80 students per year can be served by a single combined reading room/clinic.

Reading rooms and clinics are located in the schools they serve, or in nearby portable classrooms. Students participate in Conquest for a full year and are typically drawn from several classrooms in each school.

CAUTION: Starting out with more than two or three combined reading room/clinics makes it impossible for the project director to provide the necessary level of training and supervision.



Personnel

The project director:

- is a capable administrator at the district level.
- is an expert reading teacher.
- is an effective trainer.
- maintains the enthusiasm of the project staff.
- can direct and control instruction.
- works half-time initially and full-time once training begins.

Reading coordinators:

- are certified reading specialists.
- individualize instruction for four students per session.
- provide assistance to the project director in training and advising less experienced clinicians.
- monitor record keeping.

Clinicians:

- are capable, experienced teachers in the district or new teachers with strong potential.
- are conscientious record keepers.
- individualize instruction for six students per session.

Aides:

- have 30 semester units of college.
- assist clinicians with instructional and organizational tasks in the classroom.

Clerks:

- help with record keeping and producing materials.

Counselor:

- conducts group and/or individual counseling sessions with students.
- assists project staff in dealing with emotional needs of students.
- may administer tests and interpret results for teachers and parents.

Nurse:

- provides visual, auditory, and dental screening of eligible students, as well as referral and follow-up care.

The staff needed for Conquest includes a project director and secretary, coordinators, clinicians, aides, and clerks. The part-time services of a counselor and nurse are also utilized in the project.

A strong project director is the key to the success of Conquest. He or she must be a highly skilled instructional leader as well as a capable administrator. Although the project benefits from a well-qualified staff, only the reading coordinators need be certified reading specialists. A nurse and a counselor provide the part-time auxiliary services that help make Conquest unique.

Conquest Project Director

It is critical that the project director of Conquest be an expert reading teacher who commands professional respect in the district. He or she should also bring administrative experience or potential to the job.

In Conquest, the project director controls the instructional process. Therefore, project success largely depends on the professional expertise of the director, and on the quality of training and supervision he or she provides. The project director selects and orders materials and carefully trains the staff in the use of these materials within the framework of Conquest diagnostic and prescriptive procedures. Through regular in-service meetings and frequent visits to the labs, the project director closely monitors instruction. The project director also serves as a resource for new ideas and makes suggestions for helping individual students.

Authority and diplomacy are required to select the schools to be served and to gain the cooperation of school principals in arranging for classrooms and setting up lines of authority and communication.

The project director hires and fires the staff, insuring that only teachers who work effectively with Conquest procedures stay in the project. He or she must also negotiate with district administrators for the part-time services of a counselor and the consulting services of a nurse.

Maintaining close communication and good relations with nonproject personnel is a continuing administrative responsibility. The project director serves as mediator between project demands and the needs of the staffs in participating schools.

Most parent contact is coordinated by the clinician, but the project director supervises parent involvement and handles any difficulties that arise between parents and project teachers.

Other administrative tasks include review of clinician performance, purchase of materials and equipment, control of project budget, and project evaluation.

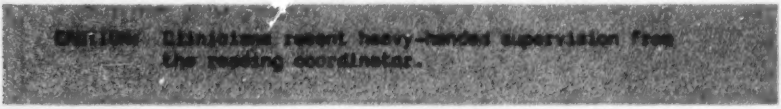
Conquest Reading Coordinators

The role of reading coordinators is to provide assistance to the project director in the training and support of less experienced clinicians. However, since the clinicians report directly to the project director and operate independently in the classroom, the reading coordinator functions more as a consultant than an authority figure.

Reading coordinators should have qualifications in addition to those required of clinicians. They should have a master's degree or be a certified reading teacher. In addition, they should have experience or demonstrated competence as managers.

The reading coordinators instruct four students per hour, coordinate instruction in the lab, provide clinicians with any assistance they need in testing and instruction, and monitor record keeping. Other major duties of the coordinators are to assist the project director with in-service training and to provide liaison between the Conquest lab and the school. The coordinators assist the project director in ensuring that the needs of principals and classroom teachers are considered, and that they are informed of student progress on a regular basis.

The number of students taught by reading coordinators varies with the size of the project. As the number of labs increases, the coordinator spends more time coordinating instruction, training, and assisting clinicians in the various centers, and less time is available for teaching students directly.



Conquest Clinicians

The initial skill of Conquest clinicians is less important than the personal qualities they need to develop close personal relationships with project students. It is essential that they be warm, responsive people who are able to provide the support and reinforcement needed to improve the self-concepts of Conquest children. Sensitivity to a child's frustration with learning enables clinicians to pace instruction to ensure success.

Because clinicians receive comprehensive training and close supervision in carrying out Conquest's procedures, they need not initially be skilled reading teachers. They should be new teachers with good potential, or the best available teachers in the district.

Clinicians instruct six students per session, individually and in small groups. While diagnostic and prescriptive procedures are largely structured, the clinicians make judgments about specific materials and activites to use with individual students.

Individualizing instruction for 30 students each day is a demanding task, requiring clinicians who are dedicated to the students and the project. When necessary, they must be willing to devote extra time and energy to make the project go.

Conquest Aides

Each combined lab has an aide to assist the clinicians with instructional and organizational tasks. Aides are selected who have had 30 semester hours of college. This qualification allows them to assist in the instructional process rather than simply set up equipment and monitor the entrance and exit of the children.

Conquest Clerks

Each combined lab requires a half-time clerk to assist in keeping records of test scores and individual lesson plans, and in the preparation of mimeographed instructional material.

Conquest Counselor

The counselor provides part-time testing and counseling services to project students and acts as a consultant to the staff. The counselor is occasionally called upon to administer diagnostic and other tests and to interpret their results to clinicians or parents. In some cases, the counselor mediates among classroom teachers, clinicians, and parents concerning an individual student's placement in the project. He or she conducts group guidance sessions to help students adjust to clinic placement and, if qualified, provides individual therapy for children with emotional problems. During training, the counselor orients new staff members to the stress children may feel in being placed in the project, sensitizes the staff members to the kinds of emotional growth that can be fostered in the clinics, and helps clinicians do simple counseling in the classroom.

Conquest Nurse

To assess health conditions that may be contributing to students' reading difficulties, the consulting services of a district or school nurse are provided. These include a visual, auditory, and dental examination of eligible students, as well as referral and follow-up care.

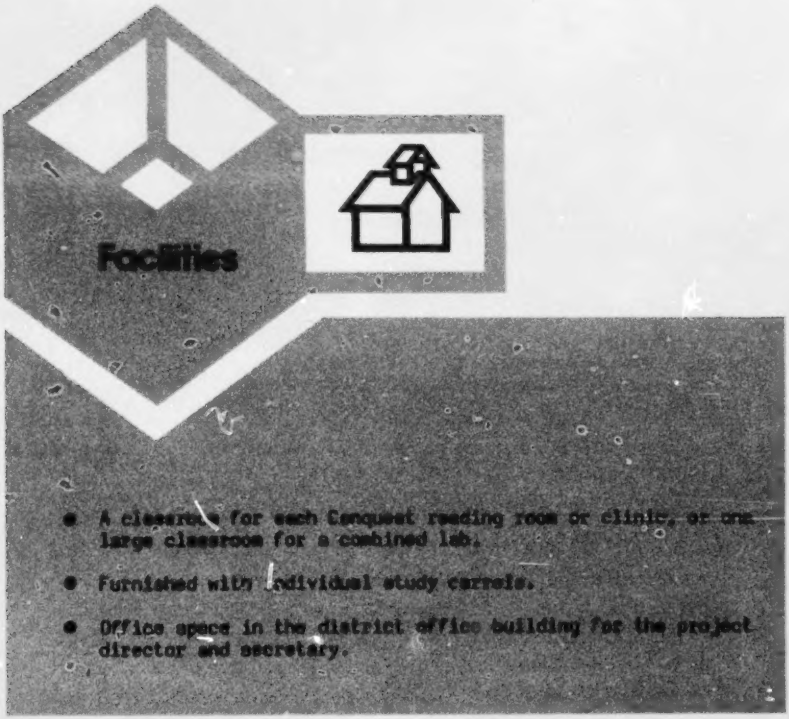
- A wide variety of commercial materials keyed to each skill.
- Materials follow the diagnostic and prescriptive procedures used in the project.
- Core materials and equipment available for start-up workshop in August.

A programmed reading series plays an important role in Conquest and interlocks closely with the diagnostic and prescriptive procedures used. But there is also a wide variety of other commercial materials to teach the prescribed skills, ranging from teaching machines and books to filmstrips and games. Teachers attempt to keep student motivation and interest high by selecting materials that are not being used in the students' regular classrooms and by introducing three or four different activities during each session.

About $8,000 provides the core equipment and materials recommended in the PIP for one combined reading room/clinic. This amount varies widely depending upon the quantity of recommended materials already in the district. The project director, who is in charge of ordering project materials, orders the core materials in the spring so that they will be available for training before instruction begins. Clinicians are not strictly responsible for developing their own materials, but they are typically on the lookout for new activities to help students learn particular skills.

Clinicians in some of the tryout sites initially considered some of the project materials too easy or dull for the students. They were surprised to find that not only did students like them but, when used as specified, they worked.

CAUTION: Delay in ordering commercial core materials can seriously hamper project implementation.


Facilities
• A classroom for each Conquest reading room or clinic, or one large classroom for a combined lab.
• Furnished with individual study carrels.
• Office space in the district office building for the project director and secretary.

Conquest labs are appealing places for students to come. Well-equipped and colorfully decorated by the staff, they serve both to motivate and inform project children.

Each Conquest lab requires one classroom typically located in the school it serves. The classrooms are used full days for the entire year. If space is not available in the school or if the principal is reluctant to set it aside for Conquest, a nearby portable classroom should be used. Principals should not be alienated in the process of arranging space for the project.

Individual study carrels are vital to the Conquest labs. Each carrel is labeled with an individual student's name. Students like having their own personal work space, and teachers find that the carrels encourage students to work independently. Carrels also make it easier for clinicians to offer individual assistance to students.

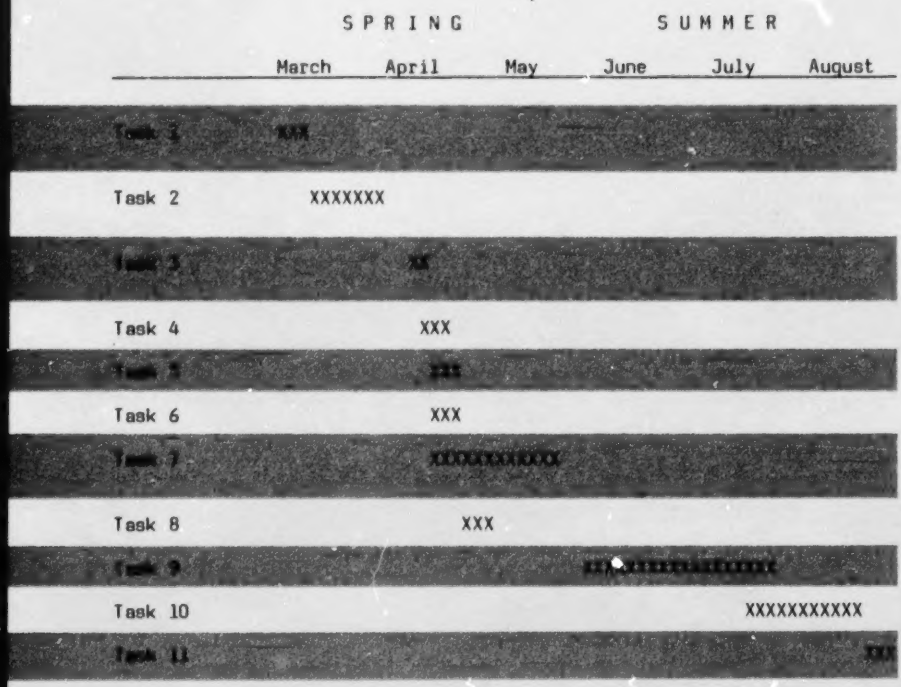
Furnished and equipped office space for the project director and secretary is located in the district office building.

CONQUEST GETTING STARTED

If your district elects to implement Conquest, and your application for the PIP is approved, the project director will have many planning tasks to complete before training and instruction begin in the fall. The director's role is extremely important. The same person should carry out initial tasks and subsequent troubleshooting. He or she should start in March on a half-time basis to carry out the required start-up tasks within the time frame shown on the chart facing this page.

The project director:

1. begins work, secures office space, and familiarizes self with project.
2. orients personnel of tentatively identified schools and other relevant administrators in the district.
3. arranges with principals to designate space and confirms numbers to be served.
4. recruits and interviews prospective staff.
5. surveys materials and equipment.
6. orders necessary furniture, core materials, and equipment.
7. hires staff and arranges for services of a district nurse and counselor.
8. hires external evaluator or designs project evaluation.
9. sets up centers.
10. plans start-up training workshop.
11. conducts two-week start-up workshop for staff.


SPRING
SUMMER
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Task 1
Task 2
Task 3
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Task 5
Task 6
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CONQUEST

ADOPTION CRITERIA

INTENTION

Select Conquest only if your school district can meet the following requirements:

INSTRUCTION

- Project determines sequence of activities and schedules.
- Students work mainly in carrels, guided by an activity folder.
- Student-teacher ratio during a period six to one or four to one.

MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATION

- Strong instructional and administrative direction from the project director.
- Project director monitors instruction frequently and conducts weekly in-service training with help of reading coordinators.

ORGANIZATION

- Administrative personnel
  Project director and secretary (full-time)
- Instructional staff (one combined reading room/clinic)
  Reading coordinator
  Two clinicians
  One aide
  One clerk (half-time)
- Auxiliary staff
  Counselor (quarter-time for every two combined reading room/clinics)
  Nurse (initial screening, consulting)
- 80 students each year per combined reading room/clinic.

CONQUEST

ADOPTION CRITERIA

CAPABILITY

Select Conquest only if

The following resources are available:

PERSONNEL

- Project director is a capable administrator and expert reading teacher.
- Project director can direct and control instruction.
- Reading coordinators are certified reading specialists or have master's degrees.
- Reading coordinators individualize instruction for four students per session, and assist project director.
- Clinicians individualize instruction for six students per session.
- Aides assist clinicians with instructional and organizational tasks in the classroom.
- Clerks help with record keeping and producing materials.
- Counselor assists project staff in dealing with emotional needs of students.
- Nurse provides visual, auditory, and dental screening of eligible students, referrals, and follow-up care.

MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT

- A wide variety of commercial materials keyed to each skill.
- Core materials and equipment available prior to first week of school.

FACILITIES

- A classroom for each Conquest reading room or clinic, or one large classroom for a combined lab.
- Individual study carrels.

You can meet the schedule for getting started:

- Project director starts in March.
- Schools to be served confirmed in April.
- Core materials/equipment ordered in April.
- Staff hired and services of counselor and nurse arranged with the district in May.

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